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Chamber

1 message

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 To: Dan Halden <daniel.halden@lacity.org>

Mon, Dec 7, 2015 at 4:11 PM

See attached to Herb Wesson. Same letter went to Mitch.

Leron Gubler

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December 1, 2015

Council President Herb J. Wesson, Jr.
Tenth Council District
City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring Street, Room 430
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council President Wesson:

We have been monitoring recent actions by the City Council dealing with homeless issues in Los Angeles. While some progress has been made, it is frankly not enough. We are alarmed by two horrific attacks that have taken place within the last two weeks by mentally-ill homeless individuals in Hollywood. Our residents, employees and visitors do not feel safe walking local streets. Enclosed you will find a letter from the Sunset & Vine Business Improvement District to Mayor Garcetti earlier this fall that outlines the problems they are witnessing, including a 65-percent increase in homelessness.

We applaud the City Council for the appointment of a committee to deal with homeless issues, and we appreciate the steps that have been taken thus far. However, we are sure you would agree that more needs to be done. Our members are out on the streets daily and have provided us with their input. Here are some suggestions that we believe would make a difference:

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES. The LAPD and local BID security officers are well aware of the most dangerous homeless individuals. County and City services need to be coordinated to get these people off the streets and into supportive programs. If they refuse emergency housing and supportive assistance, then they should not be allowed to wander our streets. Public Safety is at risk here. Our citizens should not have to feel unsafe walking our streets because the local agencies are hamstrung by a lack of resources and a legal environment where fear of the courtroom has led to fear on our streets.

DEVOTE MORE RESOURCES TO HOMELESS ISSUES. While providing more temporary shelter on public and private property and creating an L.A. version of the much-praised Santa Barbara Safe parking program are steps in the right direction, they are not enough. Funding sources need to be identified to generate the \$100-million pledged earlier this year to address homelessness. More temporary shelters are needed immediately to deal with the upcoming El Nino storms. The process to speed

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up the approval of more affordable housing and permanent supportive housing needs to be executed - NOW.

DECIDE WHAT NEEDS TO BE RECRIMINALIZED AND PURSUE IT WITH THE STATE. Some of the problems we are seeing may be related to unintended consequences from Proposition 47 and AB109. When the State changed drug possession from a felony to a misdemeanor with Prop. 47, it consequently made it more difficult to prosecute criminals by dramatically softening penalties for many non-drug offenses. State prison is no longer possible as punishment in many of these cases. To make matters worse, the justice system lost all leverage to mandate rehabilitative drug programs. We urge you to meet with our LAPD officers, who are on the street dealing with these issues and to seek their input on what would aid them in dealing with criminal activity related to homelessness. While it is important that we not criminalize homelessness, it is still important to deal with homeless individuals who commit crimes and threaten public safety. Thus, it is important that these points be made in a Citywide push on the State to change the laws that have had these unintended consequences.

LEGALLY DEFINE HOMELESS SUBPOPULATIONS. There are several sub-populations within what is generally referred to as the homeless; within the needy homeless, one can identify the mentally ill, war veterans, the chronic homeless, and the newly homeless – each which requires a different level of support and tailored response. In Hollywood in particular, there is also a sharp differentiation between the needy homeless and those seeking a "lifestyle" on our streets. The "lifestyle" homeless, usually young people from out of the region, refuse services and housing even if it is available. A "Send-Home" program should be funded where out-of-region homeless here seeking a lifestyle should be afforded a return trip to their home states.

IMPLEMENT THE CLEAN STREETS INITIATIVE. The Mayor's program that was announced earlier this year, needs to be implemented. Homeless encampments need to be moved off our sidewalks into designated areas so that the public can feel safe and can enjoy our public spaces. Public spaces and streets are for everyone to use, not reside, and in our attempt to be humane to the homeless by allowing encampments as we presently do, we are not effectively dealing with the root causes, public safety, and are instead exacerbating the problem.

These are steps that we believe are needed to begin to bring order to the current chaotic situation. There are certainly additional steps that others may suggest. The important thing is to take action - immediately.

Sincerely,

Beth Marlis
Chair of the Board

Leron Gubler
President & CEO

enclosure